

I will be unable to attend the hearing on Feb. 4, so would like to provide you with these comments, and ask that they be included in the record, if that is possible. I am also sending comments to other committee members prior to the meeting.

1. I am very concerned about this bill and urge you to withdraw your co-sponsorship of it. While every teacher in every discipline should teach students to analyze information, this bill targets only specific issues. It is a dangerous anti-science bill, which encourages teachers to teach creationism as a scientific alternative. Creationism belongs in churches, and is not a scientific theory. The bill also makes it possible for teachers to refrain from teaching evolution and climate change on the grounds that they are controversial. Scientists know that bacteria evolve constantly, creating drug-resistant strains. This is fact, and it, and evolution as a whole, is not controversial.

The bill uses innocent-sounding language about academic freedom. No bill is needed to "direct teachers to create an environment that encourages students to intelligently and respectfully explore scientific questions". By targeting only a few issues, the bill makes clear that its goal is not to encourage scientific exploration, but to harm scientific discussion of topics that some do not want to see discussed.

I hope you will fight hard to ensure a strong separation between church and state. Bills that undermine this separation are very dangerous to our citizens. Evolution is not in conflict with Christianity. This is confirmed by The Clergy Letter Project, signed by 13,000 clergy members of different denominations, which supports the teaching of evolution and recognizes that religion and science should coexist easily.

This bill also threatens Colorado's economy, the two biggest sectors of which are tourism and higher education. Tourism and climate are very closely linked, whether skiing or rafting or fishing; this bill would also harm the reputation of our school systems, both for people thinking of moving here from out of state, and for our own children.

My husband and I were raised in Colorado and have raised our children here. Please help ensure that Colorado remains a state with a strong wall between government and religious beliefs, and that Colorado's economy continues to prosper with Colorado not becoming seen as a backward part of our great country.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Lee Cassin